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1. WHAT IS THE ILLINOIS INVENTORY OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS?

The Illinois Inventory of Educational Progress (IIEP) is a systematic effort by the Illinois Office of Education to collect information on how groups of Illinois students perform in certain areas and to make that information available to educational decision-makers.

2. WHY CONDUCT SUCH AN INVENTORY?

Before the existence of the IIEP, the quality of education in Illinois was "measured" largely in terms of student-teacher ratios and per pupil expenditures. It was assumed that the more money spent on education the higher the quality of that education.

However, these figures gave no real indication about what kind of knowledge students acquired as a result of those expenditures. No one really could say what Illinois students knew, felt, or could do. With the IIEP, reliable information is available for the first time to help state-level decision-makers make better informed policy decisions and recommendations about statewide educational activities.

3. WHAT ARE THE GOALS?

The two major goals of the IIEP are:

- 1) to make available the first census-like data on the educational attainments of Illinois students;
- 2) to measure any growth or decline which takes place over time in selected aspects of the educational attainments of students.

4. WHAT SUBJECT AREAS WILL BE ASSESSED?

A number of areas will be assessed, for example, reading, mathematics, science, and citizenship. 1976 was the first year of the cycle, and student performance in the areas of reading and mathematics was assessed. Student attitudes toward school-related issues also were assessed.

In the second year, 1977, science and citizenship were the areas of assessment. In each of the coming three years, mathematics and reading will be reassessed along with a third curricular area. Baseline data will be collected during the first year that any subject area (e.g., reading) is assessed. For each succeeding year that reading is reassessed, comparisons can be made concerning student performance on specific objectives, and any growth or decline in achievement can then be noted.

5. WHAT KINDS OF TESTS DOES THE IIEP USE?

The IIEP employs an objective-referenced approach, rather than the traditional, well-known norm-referenced approach. An objective-referenced assessment instrument assesses student performance. Desired student performance is expressed in terms of objectives. Therefore, an objective is a statement of desired student performance as for instance: "Fourth grade students should be able to recognize geometric shapes such as circles, etc." Student performance is measured by test items designed to determine whether or not certain groups of students are able to do what the objectives state they should be able to do.

A norm-referenced approach would have been chosen if the intent of the assessment was to rank students in order from low achievers to high achievers, depending upon how well they performed on the test. However, the intent of the IIEP is to determine how well groups of Illinois students achieve the objectives rather than how well the individual student performs in relationship to other students taking the test.

6. HOW ARE THE TESTS DEVELOPED:

Objectives Development Committees composed of educators at the elementary, secondary, and university levels have developed objectives and test exercises for those subject matter areas chosen for the Illinois inventory. Before being included in any inventory, the objectives must be considered:

- . meaningful to learning area specialists;
- . acceptable to educators as learning goals; and
- . valuable and important for a young person in contemporary Illinois society.

The objectives are rated by lay persons and professional educators from throughout the state.

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7. HOW ARE THE TESTS ADMINISTERED?

Each year selected exercises measuring the subject areas scheduled for assessment are formed into exercise packages. These packages are administered to students using a paced audio tape, with each administration monitored by specially trained "exercise administrators." The paced tapes assure as much uniformity during administration as possible and prevent student reading ability from affecting performance when areas other than reading are being assessed.

Student, teacher, and principal questionnaires also are used to collect general background information on students and schools. Data from these questionnaires enable reviewers to see how well students with given characteristics perform on the assessment exercises.

8. WHO IS INVOLVED?

A random sample with two sampling stages is used to select those students attending Illinois public schools who will participate.

First, schools throughout the state are chosen randomly. A sample of fourth, eighth, and eleventh graders is then randomly selected from lists of eligible students submitted by schools for participation. These grade levels are selected to correspond roughly with the end of the primary, elementary, and secondary levels of education.

Since the IIEP is geared towards determining how groups of Illinois students perform on given tasks, no individual student, school, or district will be identified in any reports of the results.

9. CAN LOCAL DISTRICTS USE THE INVENTORY?

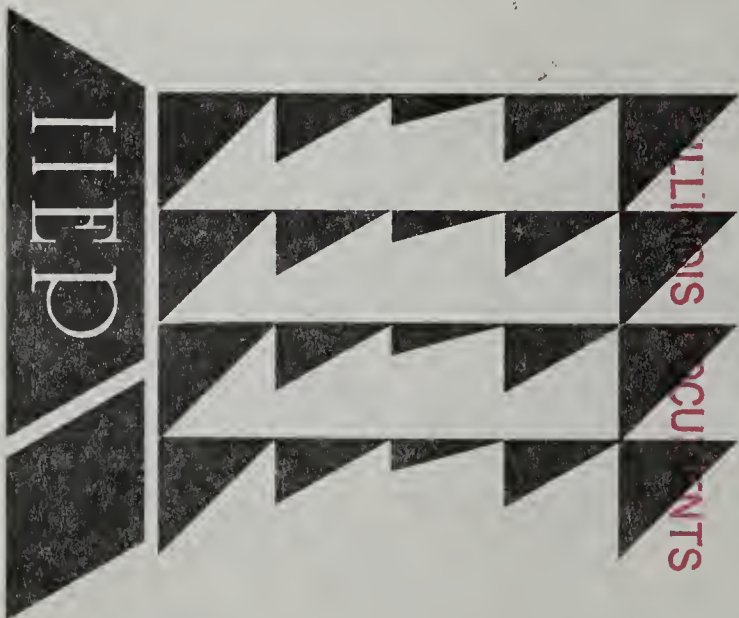
Local districts and schools are encouraged to make use of this inventory process. Upon request, master copies of tested materials will be furnished and Program Evaluation and Assessment personnel may be available for consultation. In this way, local educators can conduct their own inventories and have statewide information with which to compare local results.

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